



# Cover Letters

## A Cover letter/application letter is

- A vital component of the job search process and is your first chance to promote your skills and accomplishments to a potential employer
- Introduces you and explains why you are the most suitable candidate for the job and the organization

## Purpose of the Cover letter/application letter

- Used to get your resume read/reviewed and to generate interviews
- Used in response to specific job advertisements and vacancy announcements
- Demonstrates that your qualifications fit the requirements of the position
- Links major job dimensions with your related past experience and performance
- Shows you have researched the position/organization
- Demonstrates your writing ability

## An effective Cover letter/application letter

- Persuades an employer that your future goals align with the organization's goals
- Convinces an employer that your skills align with the position requirements and meet employer's specific needs

<p><b>Things to Do:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a unique letter for each job application</li> <li>• Follow standard business letter format</li> <li>• Address the employing official by name and, if possible, by title</li> <li>• Use power words to relate your accomplishments</li> <li>• Emphasize what you can offer the employer</li> <li>• Expand on your resume</li> <li>• Provide examples of skills, abilities, and top qualities</li> <li>• Be brief, concise, and to the point</li> <li>• Be honest and sincere; give the impression of modest confidence</li> <li>• Write naturally and sincerely</li> <li>• Use white or off-white paper to match your resume</li> <li>• Proofread, proofread, and proofread again!</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things NOT to Do:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simply repeat what is in your resume</li> <li>• Use a reproduced form letter or pre-printed letter</li> <li>• Be too formal (stilted) or too casual</li> <li>• Use stereotyped, trite phrases</li> <li>• Overuse the personal pronoun "I"</li> <li>• Include what the employer should offer you</li> <li>• Use company stationery</li> <li>• Boast</li> <li>• Fail to proof read!</li> </ul>
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## Guidelines for Setting up a Standard Business Letter

### Formatting your Cover letter:

- Length: Keep to one page
- Margins: Use standard margins (1" to 1 1/2") on all sides of the document
- Alignment: Align all text at the left margin of the paper – most common (Block style)
- Spacing: Type single-space
- Font: Use an easy-to-read font, no smaller than 10 pt. that is consistent with your resume. Do not always default to "Times New Roman"—other fonts get the job done too, such as Arial or Garamond.
- Punctuation: In a business application, the salutation (Dear Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_:) is followed by a colon and a comma follows the closing salutation (Sincerely,)
- Signature: Sign your name in ink between the closing salutation and your typed name. If you are submitting your cover letter through an Online Application System, signature is not necessary.

## *Sample Letter information*

	Your Present Street Address
	City, State, Zip
	Phone number
1 space	E-mail
3 or 4 spaces	Date
	Contact's Name (specific)
	Contact's Full Title
	Organization
	Street Address
1 space	City, State, Zip
1 space	Dear Ms./Mr. ____: Always try to find the name of a specific contact person. If it is not provided in the job description, call the organization and ask who is in charge of hiring or who supervises the particular department. Ensure that you have the correct spelling of the individual's name. If you are applying through an Online Application System and no contact person is provided, perform an exhaustive search of the organization's website to locate a contact name and/or call the organization to find this information. If your efforts prove to be unsuccessful, substitute with one of the following: Dear Human Resources Professional, Dear Hiring Manager, Dear Search Committee Chairperson, etc.
1 space	Opening paragraph: Why you are writing. Are you applying for a specific position or want to know if specific types of positions are, or will be, available? Mention how you learned about the position or organization. If referred by a faculty member, relative, or employee, note his or her name here.
1 space	Second and consecutive paragraphs (Body of the letter): Why you are interested in and qualified for the position and/or organization. Avoid lengthy paragraphs of more than five or six lines. Keep your sentences simple (but vary your sentence style!) and to the point. Outline your qualifications, strengths, accomplishments, and the benefits you can offer the organization. If you are applying for a specific position, identify key words/phrases in the job description and relate your skills to what they are looking for. (For example, if the position requires good customer-service skills: "I have had more than four years of experience in customer service and was selected to train several new employees on...") You may want to refer to your resume in this or the closing paragraph.
1 space	Closing paragraph: Close asking for a response. It may be as simple as "I look forward to hearing from you" to a more assertive approach such as "I will be contacting you within the next two weeks to inquire about setting up a time to meet and discuss my qualifications for this position." You might repeat your contact information. Thank the employer for his/her time and consideration of your application materials.
1 space	Sincerely,
3 or 4 spaces	Sign your name here
1 or 2 spaces	Type your name
	Enclosure (signals you have included your resume)

*Continued on next page*

## *Sample Letter of Application*

555 XYZ Drive  
Your Town, IL 6XXXXX  
(555) 123-5550  
psmith@IllinoisState.edu

February 7, 2XXXX

Ms. Sophie Jones  
Manager of Human Resources  
Beck's Public Relations Inc.  
1234 State Street  
Chicago, IL 60600

Dear Ms. Jones:

I am writing to apply for the position of Human Resources Assistant in your Training and Development Office. I found this position in the Illinois State University Career Center online eRecruiting listings.

My education in human resources and my recent internship at the ABC Publishing House have provided me with the experience and confidence to succeed in training and development. I noted in the job description you are looking for a professional with experience in technical writing. My time at ABC was spent developing the Web-based training manual for the professional staff to use when training new employees on customer service. ABC was recently awarded the coveted "City of Chicago Customer Service Company of the Year" by the Chicago Chamber of Commerce. I am very pleased to have been a part of that effort.

Having reviewed Beck's Web site, I am particularly impressed by the company's philosophy of "dedication to professional excellence through continued professional education." I agree wholeheartedly and would look forward to my own continuing professional development within the organization. I have enclosed my resume, which will give you additional information about my work experiences in human resources, plus my educational background.

Thank you for considering me as a candidate for this position. I have already arranged for you to receive a copy of my university transcripts (as directed in the job announcement) and I eagerly anticipate hearing from you in the near future about the prospect of an interview.

Sincerely,

Pat Smith

Enclosure

*Continued on reverse*

## *Cover letters for internships*

The guidelines for writing cover letters when applying for internships are essentially the same. Slight differences exist in the content of the body of the letter. For example, the employer will not expect you to have as much experience in the field, so it is appropriate to emphasize your academic background and campus activities that relate to the internship and showcase your skills and abilities. Also, since an internship is an opportunity to gain experience and learn hands-on skills in a particular field or industry, it is suitable to discuss your career goals and your own need for experience - something you wouldn't necessarily do in a cover letter for a regular job.

## *Other Types of Job Search Letters*

### **Prospecting letter**

- Similar to the application letter, but instead of using position information, focuses on broader occupational and/or organization dimensions to describe how your qualifications match the work environment
- Used to seek out possible vacancies in your occupation

### **Networking letter**

- Designed to generate informational interviews—not job interviews
- Used to meet individuals who can give you specific information about your intended career field

### **Acceptance letter**

- Confirms the terms of your employment (salary, starting date, etc.)
- Positively reinforces the employer's decision to hire you

### **Withdrawal letter**

Once you accept a position, you have an ethical obligation to inform all other potential employers of your decision

- Used to withdraw your employment application from consideration
- Expresses appreciation for the employer's consideration and courtesy

### **Rejection letter**

You may decline employment offers that do not fit your career objectives or interests, but do so diplomatically.

- Indicates you have carefully considered the offer and have decided not to accept it—you do not need to provide a specific reason
- Thank the employer for the offer and for considering you as a candidate.

## *Thank-you letters /notes*

This is one of the most important, yet least-used, tools in a job search. Follow up interviews with a thank-you note expressing appreciation for the interviewer's time.

- Used to establish goodwill, express appreciation, and/or to strengthen your candidacy (you may want to reiterate a point, or mention something you forgot during the interview)
- Everyone who helps you in any way gets a thank-you letter (don't forget "informational interviewers" and your references)
- Also: Don't always default to "Times New Roman"—other fonts get the job done too, such as Arial or Verdana. (However, these fonts could raise some spacing or sizing issues. Font must be compatible with electronic formatting requirements.)

Visit the Career Center Web site at [www.CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu](http://www.CareerCenter.IllinoisState.edu) or call (309) 438-2200.

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